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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6072
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4052
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0183
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 7939
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0501
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 1280
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 9040
RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/TREASURY DEPT WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 005081

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SUBJECT: IT'S A BOY! FIRST GRANDSON FOR JAPAN'S EMPEROR

REF: TOKYO 00821

¶1. Summary. Japan's long wait for a male successor to the Chrysanthemum throne came to an end early on the morning of September 6, as Princess Kiko gave birth to the Imperial family's first male heir in 41 years. His birth is likely to bring an end to any remaining debate on revising Japan's Imperial Household Law to allow females and matrilineal descendants to ascend the throne. Public reaction has been overwhelmingly positive, notwithstanding some sniping about the costs of supporting the royal family in the media. End summary.

¶2. Japan's Princess Kiko, wife of the Emperor's second son, gave birth to a boy on September 6, the first male heir to the Imperial throne born to the Emperor's immediate family since 1966. The baby boy, weighing in at approximately 5.7 pounds, was delivered by cesarean section at Tokyo's Aiiku Hospital at 08:27. Princess Kiko's husband is Prince Akishino, 40, the second son of Emperor Akihito, 72. The Emperor's eldest son, Crown Prince Naruhito, 46, has only one child, four-year-old Princess Aiko. The new baby will stand third in line after his uncle and father, according to Japan's Imperial Household Law, while Prince Hitachi, the Emperor's brother, moves down to fourth. The 1947 Law bars females, as well as males of matrilineal descent, from assuming the throne.

¶3. Some press reports this morning note that today's birth only postpones the looming succession crisis for Japan's 23-member Imperial family. Prior to today, only nine children had been born into the family in the past 40 years, and all were female. With no male members of the Imperial family under the age of forty, and collateral noble families descended from earlier emperors excluded from the line of succession, there was a possibility that there would be no eligible successor to the throne after the deaths of Crown Prince Naruhito and Prince Akishino.

¶4. The Imperial Household Agency announced shortly after the birth that the newborn would receive approximately USD 25,000 per year, the same as his two older sisters, ages 14 and 11. Prince Akishino receives ten times that amount, as stipulated by the Imperial Household Law, for purposes of "maintaining the royal dignity." News reports this morning carried detailed data on the Imperial family's expenses and how they

will be affected by the new birth.

¶5. Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe sent congratulations to the Imperial family on behalf of the ruling party, as did Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, likely next prime minister. Opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama hailed the birth as well, and called for a moratorium on further discussions of amending the succession provisions of the Imperial Household Law for the time being.

¶6. Prime Minister Koizumi announced on January 20 that he would submit a bill to the Diet to revise the Imperial Succession Law to allow females and their descendants to ascend the Chrysanthemum Throne. Calling for "cautious discussion," he expressed his desire to gain unanimous approval for the bill in order to prevent the succession issue from turning into a political fight. However, even many of his own LDP members did not support the bill. Calls by Foreign Minister Aso and Finance Minister Tanigaki for more debate did not bode well for speedy passage.

¶7. In the end, Prime Minister Koizumi's decision to seek unanimous Diet approval made it more impossible to submit the bill after it the unexpected February 8 announcement that Princess Kiko was pregnant. Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe publicly confirmed that the bill would be shelved on February 10, after which debate seemed to die down almost completely, as most Japanese eagerly awaited the birth.

¶8. According to poll results published in the February 12 Mainichi Shimbun, 78 percent of respondents were ready to

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accept a female monarch, with 52 percent in favor of revising the Law even if a male heir were born. The Imperial family did not disclose in advance whether the child was a male or female this time, perhaps in hopes of avoiding the sort of national hysteria that surrounded the birth of Princess Aiko in 2001.
SCHIEFFER